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## U.S. Navy Ceremonial Guard Marches Forward During COVID-19 Pandemic



# DEFEATING COVID-19

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A firing party from the U.S. Navy Ceremonial Guard rehearses wearing face coverings. The Navy now requires the use of cloth face coverings for all military, Navy civilian and contractors as well as family members while on DoD property, installations and facilities when maintaining proper social distancing between people isn't possible. Despite face coverings and physical distancing, the Ceremonial Guard continues to provide honors for military funerals at Arlington National Cemetery. (U.S. Navy photo by U.S. Navy Ceremonial Guard/Released)

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By: Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jason Amadi, Naval District Washington Public Affairs.

WASHINGTON (NNS) – During the COVID-19 pandemic, physical distancing protocols and stay-at-home orders have caused several Navy and joint ceremonial events to be canceled; however, the U.S. Navy Ceremonial Guard (USNCG) continues to perform their ceremonial mission including wreath-laying ceremonies and funeral services at Arlington National Cemetery.

“The funerals that we do at Arlington aren’t the only mission that we execute, but they’re by far the most dignified,” said Cmdr. David Tickle, commanding officer of the ceremonial guard. “It’s very important to us that we’re able to pay respects to those who have gone before us. We had to modify the funeral services that we provide to maintain the safety of our folks and all the families, but we do want to make sure we were able to maintain some type of honors.”

USNCG personnel involved in funeral honors wear face coverings to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. In addition, the

USNCG is performing ceremonies with fewer guardsmen than would normally be involved in most ceremonies.

“It’s definitely impacted operations in Arlington,” said Reginald L. McCallum, USNCG command master chief. “For a standard honors funeral, we have a petty officer-in-charge, eight body bearers and seven Sailors in the firing party. Before COVID-19 we would offer full honors as well, depending on the rank of the service member who died. That would add on a marching platoon, commander-of-troops, and color guard on top of everything in a standard honors funeral. We’re also still offering body bearer services, which just have one chaplain and one guardsman.”

Within the USNCG, there are four specialty platoons: the color guard, drill team, casket bearers, and firing party. Each platoon performs a unique function during a funeral. Physical distancing protocols put in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 prevent the USNCG from gathering in large groups to practice as they normally would. Guardsmen are being encouraged to come in individually to hone their skills and techniques.

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“We can’t have one casket bearer come in to practice, because that function requires eight individuals to work together as a team. But one member of the drill team can come in on their own and practice their movements. Members of the color guard can hold the colors and practice their movements. I’ve encouraged people to come in, be at least six feet from another person and continue to visualize the ceremony they’re practicing,” said Tickle.

Without a heavy schedule of events to occupy their time, guardsmen have taken advantage of volunteer opportunities on base and in their local community. Members of the USNCG help stock shelves at the Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling commissary, stand

additional watches, and a team of six guardsmen delivers meals to those in quarantine at Naval Support Activity Bethesda six days a week.

“I get calls daily thanking the guard for helping out. I’m so proud of how squared away and respectful they are. They’re respectful and have a strong willingness to help. Whether they’re helping here or some other base, they don’t mind. When we go recruiting, we pick the best of the best and it shows in the things they do here, out in the community and during ceremonies at Arlington,” said McCallum.

The USNCG currently has more than 170 Sailors, most of which are straight from boot camp. Tickle says leading Sailors during the


pandemic is the most unique leadership challenge of his 18-year Navy career.

“When is this going to end?” I’d like to know that as well, but unfortunately, no one can provide those answers. But, I have to say I’ve been overwhelmed by the sense of volunteerism from my Sailors. I’ve had so many of them come up to me and ask what they can do to help out. It’s a testament to how excited they are to be in the Navy and do their job. It’s been extraordinary and it makes me proud,” said Tickle.

The USNCG represents the United States Navy in presidential, chief of naval operations, joint armed services, Navy, and public ceremonies in the nation's capital and across the country.



### Weekly Tip for Working at Home



**Build Transitions Into (and Out of) Work**

Your morning commute not only gets you to work—from one physical location to another—but it also gives your brain time to prepare for work. Just because you’re not traveling doesn’t mean you shouldn’t carve out equivalent routines to help you ease into your workday. Maybe you usually read or listen to music on your commute. You can do that at home. Or maybe you can spend some time with a pet or loved one.

### Use Official News Sources

Monitor official news resources and public health updates regularly to stay informed. Navy Region Naval District Washington will continue to provide weekly (or more frequently as needed) updates.



See Navy-specific updates for the Navy family on the [NDW Facebook Page](#)

## Navy Commands Prepare for Hurricane Season During Pandemic

From U.S. Fleet Forces and Commander, Navy Installations Command Public Affairs

NORFOLK, VA (NNS) -- Hurricane Exercise/ Citadel Gale 2020 (HURREX/CG 20) is scheduled to begin May 11- 15, 2020 despite the current COVID-19 environment.

Co-hosted by U.S. Fleet Forces Command and Commander, Navy Installations Command, this annual hurricane preparedness/disaster response and recovery exercise is conducted prior to the onset of hurricane season to prepare staffs and crews for potential impacts on infrastructure and fleet operations.

“Our country depends on us to defend our homeland and protect our national interests – whether a hurricane named Dorian or a pandemic named COVID-19,” said Adm. Christopher Grady, commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command. “In these unique times, it is more important than ever that our fleet units and Sailors remain focused on personal and unit readiness.

We must keep our cutlass sharp, and that’s exactly what HURREX allows us to do.”

HURREX/CG 20 simulates a storm system that will develop and intensify to hurricane strength near the Gulf of Mexico and along the U.S. Atlantic Coast. During the week-long training event, all commands review procedures for current Tropical Cyclone Conditions of Readiness, which include plans for sortie of ships, aircraft evacuation, personnel accountability, and operating during mission essential staffing. Through this a simulated learning environment, commands are able to evaluate readiness and correct local processes as necessary.

“This exercise will validate the Navy’s ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from major weather events during a global pandemic,” said Vice Adm. Mary M. Jackson, commander CNIC. “We also encourage our warfighters and their families to take this opportunity to update their personal emergency response plans. Now is the time to prepare for the 2020 hurricane season. ”

All Navy commands throughout Naval District Washington, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic and Navy Region Southeast will participate. There will be no Navy ship movements associated with HURREX/CG 20, however fleet units will execute muster procedures and shore-based heavy weather responses such as heavy mooring ships of every class and heavy weather tie-downs of each aircraft type.

HURREX/CG 20 is an essential part of maintaining and improving installation support and recovery efforts before, during and after major weather events. Special precautions have been implemented to minimize the threat of COVID-19 to participating personnel. The health and safety of our people remain the top priority throughout the exercise.